

30 Days for Life

A Prayer Devotional

National Pro-life Religious Council

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Introduction

The Bible reveals that human beings, male and female, young and old, from the first moment to the last breath, are made in "the image of God." This unshakable truth gives profound significance to each human life. The National Pro-life Religious Council is convinced that it is God's will that human life be held in the high regard that he intends.

We are all well aware of the increasing assault on the dignity of human life. It is important that the Church responds with its most effective weapon - prayer. This booklet is designed to help the Christian community do the important work of prayer in the battle for preserving the sanctity of human life.

The Lord of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, instructs us to pray that God's will be "done on earth as it is in heaven." The hope of the contributors to this booklet is that, by praying with intention, the conscience of the Church will be awakened to the plight of others: the unborn child, the mother struggling with a crisis pregnancy, the elderly who feel increasingly devalued and the severely disabled who are at the mercy of the decisions of others, and, having been awakened, we will be moved to act on their behalf. Toward that end, we must pray that hearts and minds, including our own, would be turned to embrace the beauty and truth of the fact that each human being is "fearfully and wonderfully made." Such renewal might seem impossible given a pervasive and increasing disregard for human life, but remember -- our Lord teaches that we "always ought to pray and not lose heart." The One who is Lord of the Church is also Lord of Heaven and Earth!

What follows is 30 days worth of Scriptures, meditations and prayers. These have been compiled and created by members of the National Pro-life Religious Council out of love for Christ and his Church.

May God be glorified in all that we do.

Chapter 1: We Are Created by God

DAY 1

Genesis 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

The pro-life message is rooted in the two basic truths of life: 1) There is a God; 2) He isn't me

From the beginning of the Bible until the end the theme is echoed that God alone has dominion over human life. He made it; shared it; died to save it; will raise it up forever. The act of creation described in Genesis 2:7, and earlier in Genesis 1:26-27, is a sovereign act. God did not have to do it and would have been happy forever without us. Yet without our asking for it or earning it, God brought us out of nothingness and into life, and sustains our existence at every moment. And He does so in Christ. "For by Him all things were created...in Him all things exist" (Colossians 1:16-17).

"You are not your own," Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 6. God alone owns us. While He entrusts us to the care of one another, He does not allow any human being to own another. A Southern California abortionist, James McMahon, once explained how he justified killing children after 20 weeks gestation by partial-birth abortion. He did not deny that this was a child, but rather asked, "Who owns the child? It's got to be the mother." The struggle over abortion is really a struggle over the dominion of God. The Christian individual, and the Christian Church, cannot sit idly by when others declare that God is not God.

Lord, we are yours. Thank you for breathing into us the breath of life. Thank you for claiming us as your own. May our words and actions in defense of human life proclaim to all the world that you alone are Lord of life and death, Lord of our freedom and of our choices. We pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Fr. Frank Pavone

DAY 2

Psalm 139:13-16

For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed and in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.

Abortion -- the great "no"

Unlike the rest of creation, we are capable of a personal relationship with God. Not only did God create us, but created us according to a plan devised from all eternity. No matter how far back we go in our imagination, there was never a time when God did not know each of us, in every detail of our being. There was not a particular time when God decided to make us. The decision to make us has been in the mind of God from all eternity. He decided to make us for as long as He has been God. All our days were written in His book. To dare to say that a human being, developing in the womb, should not be born is as wrong as to say that a born person should not continue to grow and live. In each case, an attack on human life is an attack on the God who formed and made us. Jesus Christ is the great "Yes" to the promises of God; abortion is the great "No."

To assert that the unborn are not human is to ignore indisputable evidence and is a classic manifestation of the oppression and exploitation of people. When people challenge us to prove that the unborn are human, they should be challenged, in turn, to prove that they are human! All the scientific evidence that proves born persons are human also proves the unborn to be human.

Lord, I pray today for every unborn child. The beauty of the bodies and souls of these children flows from your hands and your eternal plan. Awaken in every human conscience a profound reverence for human life, and grant us grace to defend our smallest and most defenseless brothers and sisters, those still being formed in the secret places of their mothers' womb.

Fr. Frank Pavone

Chapter 2: We Are Made in His image

DAY 3

Genesis 1:26-27

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created them.

All human beings have worth

That all human beings are made in the image of God is the basis of human dignity and of human rights. The unborn cannot speak for themselves. Our text teaches that the Lord would have us speak and act on their behalf for to do so is one of the important ways in which we exercise the dominion God has given us over the earth and all the living things upon it, including our fellow human beings, including the unborn. This responsibility is given as a command, and calls for obedience and faithfulness. It is a truth not merely to be accepted and believed, but to be put into practice.

From the earliest days of the Christian Church the unborn child was considered a neighbor; made in the image of God and worthy of the respect and compassion we owe all neighbors. Thomas Jefferson drew on this truth in the Declaration of Independence affirming, "all men are created equal." More recently, in his Gospel of Life, Pope John Paul II upheld this fundamental affirmation of human dignity. Until all human beings, and the unborn in particular, are recognized as being made in God's image, the struggle for universal human rights will go on.

To de-legitimize abortion and to elevate the unborn into full acceptance among the human family will be a long and arduous struggle, not unlike the struggle against slavery and racism. As Christians, we are committed for as long as the struggle may take. It is a matter of truth; for the dignity of the unborn, and of every other human being regardless of race or condition, is apparent to anyone with eyes to see.

O Lord, open the eyes of the blind to the reality and the worth of the unborn. Give to your faithful people the courage and wisdom to endure in this ongoing struggle to bring them fully into the acceptance of the whole human family. We pray this in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

Rev. John Brown

DAY 4

Genesis 9:5-6

Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.

God values every human life so highly that those who take a life unjustly shall forfeit their own

The value of every human being can hardly be seen more clearly than with this verse. God, the King of the universe, has created all human beings in his image, and declares forthrightly that the unjustified shedding of the blood of any individual will require the blood of the one who shed it. God's concern for human beings is not limited to any particular group. Indeed, his concern is universal, and includes male and female, young and old, born and unborn, disabled and able-bodied, the citizens of every nation on earth.

Abortion, the deliberate killing of the unborn, is the shedding of innocent blood. Surely the blood of millions upon millions of innocent children cries out to God. It is true that we live in an age of grace, and yet this passage (among many other texts which express similar sentiments) should give every thinking Christian pause.

Christians, of all people, entrusted with the Word of God as we are, must take a stand. We must speak out. We must do all that we can to protect the innocent, to pursue justice, and to encourage the repentance of all those who bear responsibility for this great evil. Only in this manner can we hope to forestall the judgment that must otherwise surely come.

This passage should also be seen as an encouragement to educate and disciple our children and grandchildren about what it means to be human, and the responsibility that will become theirs in this ongoing struggle.

O Father, forgive us for our lack of courage and our want of compassion for the unborn and for those lost and hurt by abortion. Fill us anew with your Spirit. Renew our minds. Strengthen us in righteousness. Help us be people of salt and light within our nation. May every human being, from conception to natural death, be treated with the respect due those made in your image. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Rev. John Brown

Chapter 3: Our Life Is Given by God

DAY 5

John 1:1-3

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

Divine life, in relationship, creates human life

"In the beginning" was God. Always, before all times, there was God. This particular God -- the God of the Bible, the God of St. John's Gospel -- is different from all other gods. This God is alive and full of life. This God is not the picture of deadness and death, aloneness and isolation. This God is the picture of life, relationship, and unity. For within this God, within this one God, there are three divine persons who live, who love, and who work -- together. This is the glorious mystery of the Trinity. The Trinity means divine life. The Trinity means three, living Persons -- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- who relate to each other. The Trinity means mutual love and service among three Persons.

The Word was always with God the Father. This Word was, is, and will be the Trinity's second person. The Word is also the Son of God or, as revealed in time, Jesus Christ. God the Father and God the Son were never, and are not, self-concerned and self-absorbed Persons. Rather, they live, love, and work for each other. As one, they create "all things" together: the Father creates all things, including all human life, through the Son.

So the Father, through the Son, creates all lives, all human lives, all people. The little one swimming in his mother's womb, the infant smiling in his father's arms, the child crying in pain in a hospital bed, the energetic teen running another mile, the old man gasping for his last breath -- all were created, at their beginning, by the Father through the Son. No exceptions. Divine life creates human life.

O God, may we always be quick to call you Father. And when we call you father, help us to remember that, because of your creating love, we are your children. Also, when we call you Father, let your Spirit remind us that all people, from their beginning to their last day, are your children as well. We praise you, Father, that you sent your Son to reveal to the world that all people are His brothers and sisters, that all people are your children. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Rev. Paul Stallsworth

DAY 6

Ecclesiastes 12:6-7

Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the well. Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

At death, the spirit of man returns to the giver of life

God is giver of life, human life, all human lives. Short lived or long lived, human lives are lived out in this world. Sooner or later, all people will reach their end. The knock of death is inevitable. All will die. The metaphors for death, even in the above passage from the Old Testament -- the silver cord loosed, the golden bowl broken, the pitcher shattered, the wheel broken, the dust returning to the earth -- are many. But their meaning is clear and singular: all will die. Even so, death is not the absolute end. It is not the end of the

story. For life, at its best, does not end in a dark nothingness. We are not forced into existentialism with its crippling angst.

For as certainly as God gave life, at death the life or spirit that God gave returns to God. The Church, thanks to the ancient Greeks and Hebrews, believes that the departed's return to God is in two movements. First, the soul of the departed goes to be with God. Then, in God's perfect time, the soul of the departed will be reunited with the resurrected body of the departed for eternity.

These truths of the Christian faith cover the end story of our earthly lives. By God, we are created. For God, we live our given days. To God, we return at the end of our earthly days. And with God, we live through eternity. Clearly, all along the way, this gracious, loving God is with us. No human life is random or alone. No human life was created without purpose. Not one human life is without destiny. All human lives, acknowledged or not, are related to God -- from beginning, to end, throughout eternity. Therefore, in this world, all human lives are to be respected and protected, for their lives are signs of God's sovereignty.

O God, we too often try to live in ways that ignore our coming death. We forget that our days are numbered by you, that at the end of our days your judgment awaits, that You are the Lord of our destiny. Help us to repent daily, and then to live each day in joyful obedience. Lead us to live in the light and promise of eternity. Prepare us to live fully and sacrificially. Prepare us to die faithfully and hopefully, so that we might live forever with you. Through Jesus Christ, who has gone before us, we trust and hope and love and pray. Amen.

Rev. Paul Stallworth

DAY 7

Job 12:9-10

Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this, in His hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind

We live because God wills it so

Job was a man acquainted with grief, trials and tribulation. He had everything taken from him, including his family. He endured sickness, ridicule and judgment from his friends. Everyone gave him advice about his situation, questioning his spirituality and his God. Job's circumstances were bad, yet he never loses faith. Why? Because of what he states, "the hand of the Lord has made all life." He knows God created him and he knows his life has meaning and purpose, regardless of the circumstances.

In our present culture, we've lost that basic truth; every life, mine, yours, Job's - every life is given, made and allowed to live by God's sovereign authority. As people who pride ourselves on our independence, we have a hard time acknowledging that we are all dependent upon God for our life. From our creation, when we were knit together in our mother's womb, to the last breath we breathe, God's word is clear that "in His hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind."

It's time for us as individuals, and as a society, to recognize that we exist by God's grace and turn back to Him, honoring His word and His teachings. Why? Because our world is full of Jobs, people who are dealing with trials and tribulations and hurting desperately. Job's response should be ours as well. Regardless of what we face (even an unplanned pregnancy) God in His wisdom and mercy will redeem it. How do I know? I read the end of the book! Job's story has a happy ending. Job's friends who doubted God's sovereignty cry out to God asking for help! God instructs Job to pray for his friends and after he does, God restores all that Job had lost. In other words, because Job never lost faith and knew and trusted His Creator, the Lord blessed Job.

Thank you Father God for being the Creator of my life and every life. Please give me, and the society in which I live, an appreciation for your gift of life. Please help us set aside our pride and acknowledge that we need you. Show me how I can honor you today in response to all the blessings you bestow so freely. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Mrs. Georgette Forney

DAY 8

Psalm 104:27-30

These all wait for you, that you may give them their food in due season, what you give them they gather in; you open your hand they are filled with good. You hide your face, they are troubled; you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. You send forth your Spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the earth.

"I am a feather on the breath of God"

As the quote above portrays, we are upheld by the power and purpose of God. Our very existence on earth (from our body's first breath to its last when we leave to return home) is our Father's choice and happens only by His willing it so. He who created the universe also created that which is "me." I do not "have" a soul - I AM a soul. My entire purpose in this life, while I inhabit this body, is to find my way back to my Creator.

Beloved Father, remind us today that there is no truth but you. Do not let us fall prey to the evil one's lie that we may choose death. Remind us right now that you who created all life are in control of all life, and let us choose life always. Father, please let us hear your voice more today than yesterday - keep lighting the pathway home. Father - we're on our way. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

Ms. Vera Faith Lord

Chapter 4: God's Care and Concern for Human Beings

DAY 9

Psalm 8:3-9

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor.

It seems that every moment of our daily life is so crowded with responsibility that we rarely take much time to consider anything of worth that may be going on around us

How many times have we heard the phrase, "Stop and smell the roses"? Yet, how many times have we ignored that cliché and instead submitted to the all too "urgent" task at hand? Is it this tendency that keeps us, at least in part, from acknowledging that God's care for His sacred creation is paramount in His own mind?

The Psalmist gives us a hint at something worth considering. He shares his thoughts concerning God's handiwork: the heavens, the work of his "fingers," and then points to God's masterpiece - human life. He declares to us that God is mindful of us, or to put it another way, God keeps His masterpiece in His thoughts.

Here is the point: God, the creator of the awe-inspiring heavens, is not distracted by the tasks before Him. He is not pulled away, as we might be, by thoughts of something "more important." Despite all that goes on in the universe, we are given the wonderful news that God is paying attention to and attending His crowning glory, His masterpiece of creation, which cannot be duplicated or replaced, which surpasses the beauty of all other created things - the human being.

There is no way to adequately describe how God feels about us as human beings. There are no words to fully portray His love, compassion, or desire to be in communion with us. Perhaps the closest we can come is to contemplate the thoughts of a mother as she gazes for the first time at her newborn child. God cares for life. We, as His followers, should take time to consider the life He has created and which he has called us to love and protect.

Lord, you are the creator of all things. Guide my thoughts to consider your creation in all of its majesty, beauty and holiness. Guide my heart especially to your creation of precious human life. Help me to comprehend how essential life is in your own heart. Teach me to appreciate, love and protect all human life through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Fr. Terry Gensemer

DAY 10

Luke 4:18-19

The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.

Who has God intended to be the recipients of the Gospel?

This passage is a very familiar one. It has been preached upon on many occasions, even made popular in books and songs. Though the quote is about Jesus, all Christians take this commission seriously as a

directive as to how to reach the world with the gospel. We, like our Savior, are to bring the good news to the poor, the broken hearted, those in captivity, those who cannot see, and the oppressed.

The commission given to us in this passage is clearly a charge to care for those for whom God cares the most. I wonder though, whom do we look for to be touched by the Holy Spirit as we go out into the world? Who are the poor, if not those unborn children who have been abandoned by their parents before they ever leave the womb? Who are the broken hearted, if not those unborn children whose only example of love is having their mother take them to an abortion clinic to be destroyed, or the mother of a child who has been deceived by everyone around her into believing that what she is doing is best for her and her child? Who are the captives, if not those unborn children who are bound over to death by the "choice" of abortion? Who is more blind than an unborn child in the darkness of a womb that has become a waiting room for their death? And who is more oppressed than those unborn children whose oppression has been legitimized by their government, their church and even their family and loved ones.

Lord, you empower us with your Spirit to do your will in the earth. Send us to the poorest, the most broken, the most captive, the most blind and the most oppressed of the world, the innocent pre-born children in their mother's wombs that are scheduled for destruction. Help us to bring them healing, liberty, sight and justice through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Fr. Terry Gensemer

DAY 11

Matthew 6:25-26

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

God provides, therefore we must protect

It seems that everyone these days is on one of those designer diets. What about a diet of heavenly food? Billions of dollars are spent each year on diet plans in order to shed those hard to lose pounds, to look younger, or feel better. It seems that Americans are deeply worried about their health, their weight, and how they look. But Jesus tells us to stop worrying so much about our bodies, trusting, rather, in God's care for our physical needs

What would happen if the people who had started on a low-carb diet this year had instead gone on a diet of heavenly food? For non-believers that diet would include trusting in Christ for their salvation, and for believers it would include a renewed prayer life, a new Bible study, or even a spiritual fast during Advent or Lent. The kind of diet I am suggesting doesn't include giving up on certain kinds of foods. What this diet includes is giving up on anxiety by resting in the loving arms of Christ, trusting that He will provide. Such a spiritual diet frees us from our worries and allows us to freely praise Him and serve others. "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

This promised provision teaches us the inestimable worth of our lives. We are to be persuaded that He will not allow us to go without. This intimate knowledge and care for human life on the part of our gracious God is what motivates us to trust him for our own lives and seek for the preservation of all human life no matter what needs they may have.

Loving heavenly Father, help us to see the worth of all human beings by the way in which you provide for us. We would ask that you provide also the faith, grace and courage to enable us to protect that which is so precious to you. Through Christ our Lord, amen.

Mr. Dennis DiMauro

DAY 12

Jonah 4:10-11

But the LORD said "You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in the night and perished in the night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left- and much livestock? Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

Could God love my enemy as much as He loves me?

God doesn't value people and things like we do. Jonah loved a shade tree more than an entire city of sinful people. We love our dogs more than a terrorist. We love our cars more than a beggar on the side of the road. And sometimes, we love our money more than a child growing in a desperate teenager's womb.

But God isn't like us. Genesis 1 tells us that humans were the capstone of God's creation. We were created on the sixth day after God had completed the land, the stars, the plants and the animals. Therefore, His love for us is greater than His love for a plant, an animal, or any other created thing. And the book of Jonah tells us that He loves even the most sinful of people and seeks to bring them into His merciful arms. It's a love that seeks to touch all of his created children: that desperate teenager, the baby growing in her womb, even tyrants and terrorists. So it's up to us to imitate God's merciful love by helping and praying for those who persecute us, and those who don't love us back.

Gracious God, loving our enemies seems like one of most difficult things you could ask of us. Please remind us that this is how you love and that if you ask it of us then you will give us the grace to do it. This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mr. Dennis DiMauro

DAY 13

Psalms 68:5

A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation.

A Father of the fatherless and . . . fathers

I had a friend many years ago who confided in me that he was terrified of being a father. He and his wife already had two children when this revelation came forth. "I never knew my father," he explained, "and I have no idea what a father is supposed to do." We continued to share about this, as well as pray together. He began to see he had a father's heart for his children. His biggest problem was not a limitation on love but not knowing how to act out this love.

One day we talked about the verse quoted at the top of this page. I shared that he did know his Father... not his biological father but his Heavenly Father, who had rescued him from a life of destruction not many years before. "How did your Heavenly Father guide you?" I asked. He talked about the ways he had seen God's love offered to him and the way the Lord had used circumstances and the Scriptures to mold him and

mature him. "Well, the Lord wants to do the same thing through you for your children. Be available to His love and available to your kids. You'll do fine."

How wonderful it is to know that God takes a personal interest in each of us, many times using His faithful people - the Church - as channels of this love. No one is fatherless who lives in the Lord. His fatherly care begins at the moment of our conception, as it is written, "you knit me together in my mother's womb" (Psalm 139:12), and continues to be poured upon us throughout our lives.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for caring about each of us so deeply. Help us to see and know you as our Father in heaven each and every day of our lives. Your loving hand also rests on every child today carried in its mother's womb. May they be born into this world and come to know fully and personally your endless love. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Archbishop Randolph Sly

Chapter 5: Life in the Womb - The Incarnation

DAY 14

Luke 1: 30-33

Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

"God has assumed Humanity, joining it with Divinity, and kindled in men's hearts new love of me."

These words were written by a Roman poet in the Fourth Century. He spent his life finding ways to express the greatest mystery of the world: the Incarnation, in which God became man. Often the womb has been referred to as the "first home of the whole human race." It is the place where life begins, where our stories start. In the womb the great men and women of history began their magnificent march through life. In the womb John the Baptist leaped for joy, his first prophetic act in the presence of the Son of Man. In the womb Divinity met humanity, and God the Son was born into the world. As one of the Fathers of the early church, St. Leo the Great, declared, "Within her spotless womb Wisdom built itself a house and the Word became flesh . . ."

Recently, I was at the hospital for the birth of my fourth grandchild. Looking through the nursery window at the rows of newly born babies, I began to think of the great stories that would be written about these tiny lives just now coming forth. During his visitation with the Virgin Mary, the angel prophesied to Mary about the life of her child. Here in this hospital, I pondered, what would he say about each of these? Would they meet the One who also came from His mother's womb to redeem the world and kindle our hearts afresh for God? I thanked God for each baby alive and prayed for each story yet to be written.

Heavenly Father, you have made the womb of each woman a very special place. Help us to hold fast to the sanctity of this first home of humanity, remembering the wonderful mystery, that God inhabited the womb of a young woman and came forth as the savior and deliverer of the world. We ask this in the Name of the one who came forth, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Archbishop Randolph Sly

DAY 15

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

We serve a living God

The Word of God came to us in human form in Jesus Christ. Every time I contemplate this fact I get chills! And I think it is something that we, as Christians, tend to gloss over. I can only imagine how the first disciples felt when they were looking into the eyes of the one and only Almighty God who created them.

The first disciples developed a close relationship with Him as they daily walked and talked with Him. They ate with Him, prayed with Him and rested when He rested. As they listened to the Word of God, who was and is Jesus...they believed and "beheld His glory."

This is something we can still do today because we serve a living God. Remember, Jesus died on the cross, but rose from the dead in victory! Jesus is every bit as real and alive for all of us as He was to the first disciples. He wants us to develop a close relationship with Him in the very same way. Jesus wants us to know Him personally. He wants us to walk with Him and talk with Him on a daily basis.

Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you for your love and saving grace in Christ Jesus. Help us to realize every day the great blessing we have in our Savior. I pray that we will rise every morning with excitement and zeal, looking forward to walking another day in your footsteps fully knowing that you continue to dwell among us. Amen.

Ms. Day Gardner

DAY 16

Philippians 2:5-8

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

There is no limit to what we can accomplish when we don't care who gets the credit

Jesus Christ's life on earth exemplifies a total submission to the will of the Father. His humility, compassion, gentleness and thoughtfulness are reflected over and over again in the New Testament. He was God incarnate, yet He chose to be born to a humble, working class home. How absurd it must have seemed to the rich and powerful that the Son of God, the Messiah, the one foretold by the prophets, the 'King of the Jews,' was born and raised as a simple peasant.

During His thirty-three years on earth, He sought no riches, claimed no secular power and gathered no possessions. Yet, His short time on earth changed more lives, softened more hearts, and gave hope to more people, than all the rich and powerful human 'kings' combined. And, at the end of His life on earth, by dying on the cross, He opened the door to eternal life for those who heed his words and follow in his footsteps.

O Lord, help us follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Let us humbly and diligently work to restore legal protection for the unborn, the disabled, the medically dependent, and all innocent children of God whose lives are threatened. Let us remember the old adage that 'He can never lead who has not first learned to obey' And, Lord, grant us a peaceful heart as we labor in your name. Amen.

Mr. Ernest Ohlhoff

Chapter 6: Life in the Womb- Known by God

DAY 17

Psalm 139:16

Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.

As creatures, we are completely dependent upon our Creator

Society uses the word "reproduction" for the process of having children. Eliminate the prefix and you are left with the word "production." This encourages us to think of children as "products" that we can create, or dispose of, at will. This stubborn attempt to live independent of our Creator only repeats Adam and Eve's sin of pride; sin, which leads only to death, destruction and separation from God.

Thankfully, God, too, is blessedly stubborn. He orchestrated an amazing gesture to show us how precious we really are. In today's scripture we glimpse into our loving creator's mind. We see that our lives are not "products" from an assembly line, but individual designs that have been personally created and redeemed.

His plan of redemption took a human shape the moment He conceived Jesus as an embryo in the womb of Mary. God's Son took on flesh and bones - a human body. God's love now has a face. A face that grew up as a man and stubbornly walked directly to the cross for our sins.

As creatures, we are completely dependent upon our Creator who gives and sustains all earthly life. This same God -- who personally created man in Eden -- is still deliberately at work creating and restoring life today.

Dear Father, thank you for creating me, and all creatures, and for your divine plan to redeem your children. Please make me mindful of your stubborn love for me as I look to the death and resurrection of Jesus for my complete salvation. In the name of Christ, amen.

Ms. Maggie Karner

DAY 18

Jeremiah 1:4-5

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."

To be or not to be? There is no question!

The question of "being" is something philosophers have long pondered. What is the meaning of being and what is the source? In the passage before us, we have our answer. We have being because we are known by God.

For God to declare that he knows and sets apart the prophet Jeremiah even before he is conceived indicates that our being rests in God's own being. Because He is and because He wills, we are and do. The Apostle Paul says as much when he declares before the philosophers of his day, "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

One of the tragedies of the abortion culture is that life in the womb has been so heartbreakingly devalued. To embrace the arguments of the "pro-choice" crowd one must conclude that the child in the womb doesn't

exist, isn't there, has no being. But nothing could be further from the truth. That child is known by God and, as such, has being.

Lord God, we confess that in You we live and move and have our being. Because You are, we are. May we find grace from You to affirm the being of every human and may we labor to make this truth known to the world around us. Amen.

Rev. J. Kirk van der Swaagh

DAY 19

Psalms 139:16

Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them."

Human beings -- God's tapestries

Psalm 139 is a psalm that reveals the enormity and otherness of God. His divine attributes are on display: omniscience (2-4), omnipresence (7-12), loving-kindness (17-18), justice (19-20), righteousness (23-24), and omnipotence. Yet, when it came to express this last attribute, what example did the psalmist use - God's creation of mountains, seas, or far-flung galaxies? No, he used none of these. To express the wonder of God's unparalleled creative power the writer mentions the fashioning of the human in the womb (14-16).

The Hebrew word used to express God's forming of us in the womb, *raqam*, is the same term for needlework or embroidery. In other words, we are a tapestry that displays God's artistic mastery. And, like the artist who knows his creation down to the last detail, God intimately knows us. This reality provokes the writer to awe and wonder. He proclaims, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

What is true for this psalmist is true for every human being. Each is fashioned by God and known by him and we can proclaim on behalf of each, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

Gracious God, help us to appreciate the wonder and beauty of Your creation. Help us proclaim on behalf of every one of our fellow human beings, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." May the knowledge that we are intimately known by You shape our lives and actions. Amen.

Rev. J. Kirk van der Swaagh

Chapter 7: Life in the Womb - Vital and Unique

DAY 20

Luke 1: 41-44

And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

Jesus not only loves unborn children -- He was one himself!

Think about this for a moment.

We often hear people speak of a pregnant mother by saying, "She's expecting a child.." Now if one is expecting a package, the package is not yet there. As reflected in our verse for today, however, this is not the case with the mother. Her gift is already there. The pregnant woman, a mother already, does not have a child "on the way," but has a child, already present and in full possession of his or her human rights, starting with the right to life.

Jesus, open my eyes to your presence in the life of every child. Open my heart to joy in the birth of every child, a birth that reflects the joy of your own birth in Bethlehem. As you shared life in the womb of Mary, so now send your protection upon every child still in the womb, and grant to their mothers the strength and joy that comes from welcoming the gift of life.

Fr. Frank Pavone

DAY 21

Genesis 25:21-23

Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife because she was barren; and the Lord granted his prayer and Rebekah his wife conceived. The children struggled together within her, and she said, "If it is thus, why do I live?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples, born of you, shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger.

What an answer to prayer!

Who dares to say that the unborn are not human, with distinct personality and character right from the moment of conception? This account emphasizes the vitality and uniqueness of the twins who, because of Isaac's prayer for his wife, were conceived in Rebekah's womb.

When Rebekah was told by the Lord that the older would serve the younger twin, God already knew that Jacob and Esau would lead turbulent and conflicted lives. God knows each one of us and knows all about us, including our personality and disposition long before we are actually born, indeed, from the moment we are conceived in our mother's womb. What a tragedy of gargantuan proportions that babies, planned and endowed by the Creator, with distinct and unique personalities and with, perhaps, a future and destiny intended for greatness, have their lives snuffed out by cruel abortionists before they ever see the light of day! May our prayers that the dreadful scourge of abortion may vanish from our land be as fervent as Isaac's were for Rebekah.β

O, God, you formed us in our mother's womb and planned a unique and special life and purpose for each of us, and we do thank you. Grant that we may pray and work for an end to abortion so that no unborn baby you have made may fail to achieve your divine intention for him or her because of intentional abortion. We pray this for the sake of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Rev. Ben Sheldon

Chapter 8: Children are a Blessing from God

DAY 22

Genesis 1:27-28

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

God's intention is that we multiply and fill the earth

One of the most pernicious lies that sociologists have foisted upon the public is that the earth is becoming overpopulated. What kind of a sadistic god would create the earth and human creatures on it, only to have them literally reproduce themselves into oblivion? The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our divine Creator, has commanded us to multiply and fill the earth and far from letting the population get out of control, He has, in fact given his human creatures a dominical role over all the lesser creatures. The "birth control" movement, which had its beginnings with Margaret Sanger in the early years of the last century, has led, in many parts of the world, to a birthrate that is drastically below the normal replacement rate.

God's Word assures us that children are a blessing, that they are a reward of faithfully trusting and serving God and that they are the crown of their parents' old age. The spread of the contraception mentality that has so permeated our culture is, undoubtedly, a factor in the ready acceptance of abortion. God's commandment to multiply and fill the earth has never been withdrawn. May He help us to accept the gift of children and give him thanks for every baby who is born into the world.

Father of mercy and grace, we thank you for the gift of our children. Grant that every fiber of our being may rejoice when a new baby, our own or anyone else's, is born into the world. Help us to welcome them as we would welcome you, for whenever a new baby is conceived, another life to bear your image and another voice to praise and worship you, is beginning. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Rev. Ben Sheldon

DAY 23

Psalm 127:3-5

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

God's heritage entrusted to us

I still vividly remember the day my first child was born. As she came into the world I gazed upon the most beautiful little baby I'd ever seen. Later, I was driving home from the hospital for a shower and a fresh change of clothes when a song came on the radio, "The Men in My Little Girl's Life." For those who don't remember, this is Mike Douglas' ballad about being a father as he watches his daughter grow through childhood to womanhood. I wept as I listened, knowing those years would go by very fast... and they did.

Because I am a father, whenever I read the Psalm quoted above I'm always captivated by one word - "heritage." It basically means "something passed down from a preceding generation." That little girl I watched being born and wept for is not mine to give to God like a product of our fertility, but rather His, which he has entrusted to us. So are all her siblings. My wife and I share a great treasure: precious lives, which are placed in our lineage that His life with us might be perpetuated. To the psalmist, this was a

blessing from the Lawgiver, God Himself, who blessed Israel with another generation intended to continue their covenantal promise. For us in Christ, it is his gift of succeeding generations for His Church and her families.

These days I'm looking upon my grandchildren and rejoicing that my children and their spouses will pass on the greatness of Christ's gospel to them and thus will continue the work of God in the world. What a blessing. What a heritage!

Heavenly Father, please keep me from taking for granted the gift of children, mine and those of other families. Help us to remember this heritage that you have given us. Make us faithful stewards of these precious lives, that each generation might be raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Archbishop Randolph Sly

DAY 24

Proverbs 17:6

Children's children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children is their father.

"A chip off the old block"

One day my grandson, Alex, corrected one of his friends who had referred to me as a grandfather. "He is not," Alex responded, "he's papaw!" He understands that we have a special relationship, and with that I carry a special title. "Nana" and "Papaw" were chosen years ago and have stayed with us ever since.

While I resist the idea of being classified an "old man," I'm supremely blessed to have such a crown as Alex, along with his brothers and cousins. Wherever I go, I don't show pictures of my ministry but my grandchildren. Whatever impact I have made in the world, these precious little lives eclipse it all. Why is that? Surely I have a special love for them and a unique connection; they are bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. But is there more?

Perhaps part of the answer to that little question lies in the second half of the proverb: "the glory of the children is their father." The word "glory" can also be translated "beauty" or "jewel." In other words, my grandchildren wear an adornment as well - it is the imprint of their father's (which implies both parents) life on theirs. They are, as the cliché goes, "a chip off the old block." Part of my reward as a parent is seeing the way that those we have raised pass on their values, principles, and particularly their Christian faith, to their offspring. There is a true crown! My wife and I are able to witness a continuity of the relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ through which we have lived our lives and which we desired our children to embrace. Those same principles are being imparted again to a successive generation.

Heavenly Father, you have given us the gift of children and grandchildren. They are truly a joy and a crown. Cause our hearts to shine with delight as we see your hand upon the coming generations. Help us to focus our lives and labor on sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with each child that comes within the reach of our embrace and as they are raised for such a time as this. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Archbishop Randolph Sly

Chapter 9: Respect and Care for the Older Generation

DAY 25

Exodus 20:12

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

Extended care will extend your days

The Fifth Commandment comes with the promise of extended days here on earth. It is the first of the Ten with a promise attached.

What then shall we do to receive this reward? The commandment (not a suggestion) tells us to always remember to give high regard and respect to your mother and father.

Normally, it is when we start raising our own family that we truly begin to appreciate our parent's sacrificial service. The old saying about "walking a mile in their shoes" is an understatement. It doesn't take a mile to recognize how their devotion to family wasn't easy.

It's in the latter years of our first mentor's lives that your respect and honor will be the greatest gift you can offer. No one feels revered when they have been discarded and made to feel useless. Our honorable mention and commendation for their meticulous care during the days of our youth not only fulfills the command, but also expresses our love and gratitude to those who most certainly deserve it.

Let us remember the Fifth Commandment so we won't have to "plead the fifth" when asked of our stewardship towards our parents!

Father, we thank you for the priceless contribution our parents have made into our lives. Now, in the season when we can reciprocate their faithfulness and love, let us not be found negligent. May we show our thanks not in word only but with deeds that will make them to feel honored and loved continually. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Rev. Clenard Childress

DAY 26

Acts 6:1

Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

More folks learning, left some yearning

It is the dawning of a new day. There is much excitement in Jerusalem. Many who dedicated themselves to the faith became disciples (the word disciple means "learner"). The unprecedented church growth was miraculous and undoubtedly brought much satisfaction to the new leadership. The apostles, however, were about to experience growing pains in their master plan of evangelism.

Projects that engage the community, especially those that are evangelistic in nature, are high on the list of priorities for every duty bound pastor. Church attendance is a constant concern for every pastor and often his or her worth is measured by it. Unfortunately, just as the original twelve pastors in Acts, they can be so focused on getting people in that they inadvertently end up pushing some people out.

Murmuring is a deplorable deterrent to a harmonious fellowship, yet God used it to get the disciples attention. Those that needed daily attention due to their age and social status were being neglected. This neglect of the Hellenist widows during the daily distribution of food was causing undue grief and needed to be corrected by the leadership. By God's grace the problem was dealt with, but the lesson remains.

Today's church should be careful to not make the same mistake: forgetting the contributions of our seniors.

Father, in the Church's desire to engage our communities with the gospel let her not disengage from those who need their care and company the most. Let us gain wisdom from those who have gone before us and cherish their experiences and perspectives. Help us to appreciate every soul in the body of Christ and minister properly to everybody. Amen.

Rev. Clenard Childress

Day 10: The Obligation to Care for Our Fellow Human Beings

DAY 27

Gen 4:8-10

Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground."

"Methinks he doth protest too much . . ."

The Bible is filled with passages that speak to our obligation to care for our fellow human beings. From the many commands in the Books of Moses enjoining love of family, neighbors and even strangers, to Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, the injunction to care for others is inescapable.

In this account, the guilt-stricken Cain tries to shrug off his obligation to his own kin by dismissing it as an unreasonable duty. A la Shakespeare, though, "methinks he doth protest too much." Cain's objection doesn't stem from his sense of proper boundaries of responsibility, but from his own self-centered sense of self-preservation.

Christ said, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). This is the standard of divine love. It required God to sacrifice what was most precious to Him for the temporal and eternal well being of all humankind (see John 3:16). Though on a much-reduced scale, he expects us to do the same.

Trying to duck our obligation to others is futile. We can't get away with simply dismissing others, especially the most vulnerable among us: the pre-born, the disabled, the sick and the aged. As with Cain, God sees and hears their suffering and will call us to account for what we do - or do not do - for them.

Father, help us to embrace the fact that we are our "brother's keeper." When, due to selfish motives, we try to cast off this responsibility, please call to us to account. We would be pleasing to you and to our "brother." Through the help and grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Rev. Rob Schenck

DAY 28

Job 31:13-15

"If I have despised the cause of my male or female servant When they complained against me, What then shall I do when God rises up? When He punishes, how shall I answer Him? Did not He who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same One fashion us in the womb?"

The ground is level as we stand before God

Job lived with an awe provoking sense of God's expectation of him, particularly regarding his obligation to care for the weak and needy. He knew that in God's economy everyone stands on level ground when it comes to our status as God's creatures. Because of that central truth, we must take care of each other.

Job also knew that he didn't deserve any of the good things God gave to him. Instead, those blessings came to Job from God's benevolent heart. As an extension of that knowledge, Job instinctively linked his obligation to be generous to others to God's kindness toward him.

As in Jesus' parable of the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18:23-35), Job knew that it is an egregious sin to deny to others what we enjoy ourselves. He actually calls down on his own head severe condemnation and even punishment should he fail to share with others out of his own abundance (see verses 16-23).

Proverbs 3:27 reads, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so." Some things are so obvious that we don't even need to pray except to ask of God forgiveness and the power to do what so obviously needs doing.

God, forgive us when we try to explain away the obligation we have to help others who need help. Enable us to not devalue them because they are in the circumstance that they are in, but to see them for what they are, those, who like us, were formed by your hand in their mother's womb. Amen.

Rev. Rob Schenck

DAY 29

Isaiah 1:16, 17

"Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow."

God is just

Inscribed around the inside of the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, DC, are the immortal words of Thomas Jefferson: "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just." If the deist, Jefferson, knew in the depths of his being that God is just, how much more ought we Christians to reflect on this profound truth? The justice of God, like his holiness and his purity, encourages us to seek justice for all people. It is the evil deeds and wrong, selfish attitudes of our modern society that have led to the cavalier acceptance of abortion and euthanasia. But, as Jefferson also said, "his justice will not sleep forever."

God is calling us today to seek justice, to encourage the oppressed, and to defend the orphans and widows of our society. It is a noble calling! It is one which every true believer, every God-fearing man and woman, should heed with no hesitation and no reluctance. To follow the God of justice and truth is to stand unequivocally for the right to life of everyone, especially the unborn, the physically disabled, and the terminally ill. God's word through the prophet Isaiah is as relevant in today's 21st century world as it was in Isaiah's 8th century BC world. May God's grace help us to defend the unborn's right to life as well as that of the already born!

O God, our heavenly Father, give us courage and wisdom as we seek to eradicate the evil in our society. Help us to realize that your divine Spirit alone can change hearts and minds so that all your human creatures may enjoy the fullness of life you intended for them. I pray this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen

Rev. Ben Sheldon

DAY 30

Matthew 25:31-46

The King will answer and say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

Caring for others is not optional

Jesus' picture of the final judgment concludes with this sobering word: the wicked, who failed to care for others in their various needs (e.g., the hungry, the thirsty, the aliens, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned) will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous who did seek to meet those needs will end up with him, enjoying eternal life. We know that this was no parable! Jesus has given us fair warning! Everything in God's Word points to the truth that compassionate concern and practical care for all people, especially for the poor, the destitute, the weak and needy is required of us, if indeed we hope to escape the punishment of the fire of hell.

And who are the poor and needy, if not helpless, unborn babies, as well as the aged and infirm at the other end of life? Surely the "least of these" embraces not only those at both ends of the continuum of life, but all others in between. Just how we, as Christ's true followers, respond to his admonition "inasmuch as you did it to the least of these, you did it to me" will determine whether we enjoy eternal bliss in his presence or the bleak and dreadful reality of eternal punishment in hell. Nothing in God's Word could be clearer!

Gracious and merciful Father, we gladly embrace your Word that counsels us to care for the least of your children, and we renew our dedication to defending the unborn and all whose right to life is compromised by our godless society's selfish lack of concern. Free us from our own failures and sins so that we will be truly pro-life in every area of our lives. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

Rev. Ben Sheldon

Thank you for persevering in prayer on behalf of life. We know that God has been at work in your soul, as well as in the world, creating a culture of life where unborn children are welcome, mothers in crisis are helped, the elderly are prized and the disabled are protected.

Please continue to intercede on behalf of life and -- be prepared to act!

Contributors

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The Reverend Rob Schenck is a missionary to elected and appointed officials in Washington, DC. He is the author of *The Ten Words That Will Change A Nation*, and is a guest speaker in churches, conferences, and conventions around the country. Mr. Schenck is a Presbyterian (ordained minister) in the Methodist Episcopal Church USA, Mid-Atlantic Conference, and an Ordained Member of the Evangelical Church Alliance. Rob lives in the suburban Washington, D.C. area with his wife, Cheryl.

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Rev. Paul T. Stallsworth is the president of the Taskforce of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality, and the editor of its quarterly newsletter *Lifewatch*. In addition, he is the editor of *The Church and Abortion* (Abingdon, 1993), *The Right Choice: Pro-Life Sermons* (Abingdon, 1997), and *Thinking Theologically about Abortion* (Bristol House, 2000). The pastor of St. Peter's United Methodist Church, Rev. Stallsworth is married to Marsha, and they have four children. Contact: 111 Hodges Street, Morehead City, NC 28557, stpeters@mail.clis.com.

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